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The Fear of GOD explained and recommended.

IN A

SERMON

PREACHED AT

ST. THOMAS'S,

JANUARY 1. 1757.

For the Benefit of the

CHARITY-SCHOOL

In *Gravel-Lane, Southwark.*

By JOHN HOYLE.

Publiſhed at the Requeſt of the MANAGERS.

LONDON:

Printed for J. WAUGH, at the *Turk's-Head* in *Lombard ſtreet*; W. FENNER, at the *Angel* and *Bible* in *Pater-noſter-Row*; and C. HENDERSON, at the *Royal Exchange*. M. DCC. LVII.

[Price Six pence.]

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GENESIS XLII. 18.

— *I fear GOD.*

JOSEPH, whoſe words theſe are, being diſtinguiſhed with peculiar marks of the eſteem and affection of his father, and having related two dreams, which ſeemed to prognoſticate his future ſuperiority over his brethren; became at firſt the object of their envy, which quickly ſettled into hatred and malice. And, when *Jacob* ſent him one day into the fields, to enquire after the ſtate of his brethren and their flocks, they all joined in a conſpiracy, to ſlay him, except *Reuben*, who yet prudently concealed his utter abhorrence of their wickneſs, and only recommended a method leſs ſhocking to themſelves in its immediate execution: *viz.* to bind him, and then caſt him into a pit, where he muſt either die by famine, or fall a prey to ſome wild beaſt. He hoped by this ſtratagem privately to releaſe and reſtore him to his father. The propo-

ſal was at firſt complied with, but his artifice afterwards unexpectedly defeated, by their ſelling him to ſome merchants travelling into *Egypt*. They poſſeſſed the diſconſolate parent with an apprehenſion, that he was certainly devoured by a ſavage beaſt, and, to confirm it, produced his garment, which they pretended to have found in the fields; having before artfully dipt it in the blood of a kid ſlain for this purpoſe.

Of the merchants, *Potiphar*, a captain of *Pharaoh*'s guard, bought him; who, after ſome experience of his worth and excellence of character, entruſted him with the entire direction of his domeſtic affairs, and gave him the higheſt proofs of his eſteem and confidence. His ſituation in this family afforded him a deſireable proſpect for future life, till, unhappily, the wife of *Potiphar* entertained a criminal affection for him, and daily repeated her ſolicitations to ſeduce him to an act of the greateſt injury to an indulgent maſter, and generous friend. *Joſeph*, indeed, preſerved his virtue, but fell a Sacrifice to the reſentment of this looſe woman: who accuſed him to her huſband of an attempt to violate her honor, and he, too credulous to the tale, in conſequence of this, caſt him into priſon. The circumſtances of his confinement were, however, greatly alleviated by the favour of the Jailor, who

employed

employed him in the character of his deputy.

Here an extraordinary accident aroſe, to which he owed his future deliverance. *Pharaoh* had, through ſome diſguſt, committed his chief butler and baker to this priſon; and, on their mentioning two dreams, which peculiarly affected them, *Joſeph* gave an interpretation of them, afterwards confirmed by the events. At the ſame time he deſired the former, when reſtored to his office, to procure, if poſſible, his diſcharge; informing him in part of his true hiſtory, and preſent unjuſt impriſonment. This requeſt he long ungratefully diſregarded. But *Pharaoh* having himſelf in vain applied to his magicians for the meaning of a dream, into which he had fallen, the butler acquainted him with his experience of the qualifications of *Joſeph* in this reſpect: upon which he ſent for him out of priſon, related his dream, and received an immediate explanation of it, as ſignifying ſeven years of great plenty, and as many of grievous famine. And he adds, *Now, therefore, let Pharaoh look out a man diſcreet and wiſe, and ſet him over the land of Egypt. Let Pharaoh do this; and let him appoint officers over the land, and take up a fifth part of the land of Egypt. And let them gather all the food of thoſe good years that come, and lay up corn under the hand of Pharaoh, and let them keep food in the cities. And that food*

food ſhall be for ſtore to the land againſt the ſeven years of famine, which ſhall be in the land of Egypt, that the land periſh not through the famine. To which the King naturally enough replied: *Foraſmuch as God hath ſhewed thee all this, there is none ſo diſcreet and wiſe as thou art. Thou ſhalt be over my houſe, and according to thy word ſhall all my People be ruled: only in the Throne will I be greater than thou.*

By this wiſe proviſion, not only the *Egyptians*, but the inhabitants of other countries were ſupplied with bread. To this granary the people of *Canaan* in particular reſorted, and, amongſt the reſt, the offspring of *Iſrael*, or *Jacob*. *Joſeph* knew his brethren, but choſe to conceal himſelf from them for a time, and, in order to bring them to a due reflection on their paſt crimes, treated them with great ſeeming ſeverity, as ſuſpected ſpies. This charge they ſolemnly deny, aſſuring him, they had no other deſign but to buy food, *were true men*, all brethren by the ſame father, who had originally twelve children, one of which was dead, and another, the youngeſt, detained at home. Their anſwer appeared rather to increaſe, than remove his ſuſpicions. He, therefore, repeats the accuſation, adding: *Hereby ſhall ye be proved. By the life of Pharaoh, ye ſhall not go forth hence, except your youngeſt brother come hither. Send one of you, and let him fetch your brother:*

and

and ye ſhall be kept in priſon, that your words may be proved, whether there be any truth in you: or elſe, by the life of Pharaoh, ye are ſpies. But on the third day of their impriſonment he a little ſoftens the rigour of his demands. *And Joſeph ſaid unto them the third day, This do, and live: for I fear God. If ye be true men, let one of your brethren be bound in the houſe of your priſon. Go ye, carry corn for the famine of your houſes, but bring your youngeſt brother unto me, ſo ſhall your words be verified, and ye ſhall not die.* His fear of God is, then, mentioned by *Joſeph*, as a ſecurity to his brethren for his inviolable adherence to the engagement, into which he had entered.

This Principle it will be our Buſineſs

I. To explain, and
II. Recommend.

I. We are to explain the Principle. By the fear of God we are not to underſtand a ſlaviſh and tormenting dread upon the mind, ariſing from the conſideration of almighty power; as if under the direction of an arbitrary, or capricious, a malevolent, or implacable Being. This is ſuperſtition in its moſt hideous form, extremely prejudicial to true religion, unfriendly to man, and injurious to the real character of God. The term is frequently applied in Scripture to denote the

the whole of piety, or of virtue, as proceeding from piety, and ſupported by it. And ſo far is it from neceſſarily implying a ſecret apprehenſion of any wrong diſpoſition in the Being, who is the object of it, that *Hoſea* ſpeaks with the utmoſt propriety, *of fearing the Lord, and his goodneſs (a)*. And the Pſalmiſt obſerves: *There is forgiveneſs with God, that he may be feared (b)*. There is, then, a fear, not only conſiſtent with, but even immediately ariſing out of, a ſenſe of the goodneſs of the Divine Being, and a hope in his mercy. It is, therefore, very raſh and unjuſt, to repreſent this as wholly an illiberal, and ungenerous principle: ſince true gratitude is inſeparably attended with an ingenuous fear of offending, and gives additional force to every other motive to a dutiful temper and conduct. The connection of theſe muſt indeed be preſerved, if we would render it worthy of the nature, and acceptance of God.

This affection owes its being and ſupport to the conſideration of the univerſal preſence of God, his infinite knowledge, almighty power, unerring wiſdom and perfect holineſs; and particularly reſpects him as the moral governor of mankind, requiring their obedience to the laws of righteouſneſs, rewarding the ſincere and upright, and puniſhing offenders in proportion to their reſpective cha-

(a) Hoſ. iii. 5. (b) Pſal. cxxx. 4.

characters. It includes ſupreme veneration of the divine nature and perfections, reverence of the divine ſovereign authority, ſolicitude to gain the approbation and Favour, and avoid the diſpleaſure of God; is a principle, which ought habitually to poſſeſs the mind, under the influence of which the whole temper and conduct muſt be directed, reſtraining us from evil, and ſecuring us in the regular and diligent practice of virtue. We are therefore exhorted *to be in the fear of the Lord all the day long: to paſs the whole time of our ſojourning here in his fear: to ſet the Lord always before us, that we ſin not againſt him: and to perfect holineſs in his fear.*

II. We are to recommend this Principle.

1. It is natural and juſt; what the perfections of God demand; and becoming our relations to him. Eſteem and reverence for any particular being are wont to ariſe in the human mind in proportion to his apprehended dignity of nature, and excellence of character. This is an honour ſtrictly and unqueſtionably due. Since God, therefore, poſſeſſes in himſelf every perfection, and is the original ſource of all that is great, amiable and good, and attractive of the regard and reverence of reaſonable beings: a ſupreme veneration of his nature and perfections, (which the fear of him hath been

ſaid to include) whenever they are perceived, and juſtly conſidered, will be naturally excited in all creatures formed, like men, with a capacity of diſcerning moral worth and excellence, and the reſpect they merit.

The veneration produced by peculiar and eminent degrees of perfection, is alſo inſeparably attended with a certain ſerene awe, in all good beings of *inferior natures and characters*, and obtains a commanding influence and power proper to itſelf. How does the preſence of ſuch a being inſpire us with every noble ſentiment, and worthy diſpoſition of mind, prompt us to every decent and honourable action, and reſtrain us from every thing criminal and baſe? How do we feel ourſelves inſtantly diſpoſed to yield to his will, ſtruck with a prevailing ambition to gain his approbation, and ſolicitude to avoid his cenſure? If this be an affection of the leſs liberal kind, it yet appears natural and juſt from beings of imperfect natures and characters, when comparing themſelves with thoſe of higher and nobler; an effect of that humility which ſuits their condition and circumſtances, and an homage to which ſuperior beings ſtand certainly entitled. Thus (to allude to the words of *Job (c)*) ſhould a ſacred awe of God fall upon us, conſtantly govern our whole temper and conduct; and a view of his excellency check every diſorderly incli-

(c) Job xiii. 11.

inclination, reſtrain us from any thing unlike his nature, oppoſite to his will, and that would incur his diſpleaſure. The perfection, then, of God, his complete and abſolute perfection! though taken apart from every other conſideration, muſt render him the immediately proper object of our ſupreme reverence or fear.

But whatever be due to ſuperior perfections, yet the particular relations, we bear to any being poſſeſſed of them, will naturally and juſtly obtain an additional efficacy to enforce our regard to them. *E. g.* The reſpect proper to beings of diſtinguiſhed and tranſcendent natures and characters, would be more ſtrongly expected from thoſe who ſtood in the relation to them of a beneficiary to a benefactor; a dependent to his ſupporter, guardian and friend; or a ſubject to his governor. Any defect in it would in all theſe caſes raiſe our peculiar indignation and horror. For there are obligations immediately reſulting from ſuch relations themſelves; to our moral perception and ſenſe of which God hath condeſcended to appeal by his Prophet *(d)*. *If I be a Father, where is mine honor? And if I be a Maſter, where is my fear, ſaith the Lord of hoſts.* How, then, ſhould the conſideration of our deriving our being from God, with all the benefits we have ever enjoyed, and of our neceſſa-

(*d*) Mal. i. 6.

rily depending upon him every moment for all the happineſs of which we are farther capable: how ſhould the conſideration, that when univerſally involved in a ſtate of guilt and wickedneſs, he ſent his only begotten and well-beloved Son, authoritatively to publiſh the glad tidings of pardon and ſalvation, aſcertain to us the terms of divine favour and acceptance, give us the cleareſt and fulleſt knowledge of our duty, lead us to the practice of it by the powerful attraction of his own perfect example, die for our ſins, and riſe again for our juſtification; invite us by his goſpel to be reconciled unto God, offer us the aſſiſtance of the holy Spirit, to enable us to perform every duty, and overcome every difficulty and trial, and ſet before us the higheſt encouragement of eternal and inconceivable happineſs and glory: how, I ſay, ſhould the conſideration of this, irreſiſtibly engage us to a conſtant and ſupreme attention to the perfections of his nature, and moſt effectually ſecure them the reverence they demand? He that can allow himſelf in any inſtance of irreverence againſt the perfections, any neglect of, or oppoſition to, the ſacred pleaſure of a being, to whom he is ſo infinitely indebted; contracts a degree of baſeneſs that ſhocks every mind, in which there are yet any remains of ingenuity, but to think of. How juſt then, but how ſevere, the complaint of God againſt the *Iſraelites*? *Hear O hea-*

O heavens, and give ear O earth: I have nouriſhed and brought up children, and they have rebelled againſt me (e). Yet how much ſeverer ſtill would this be, if applied to wicked chriſtians, whoſe guilt is aggravated by vaſtly ſuperior, and ineſtimable proofs of the divine mercy and favour.

But then it is alſo extremely obvious, and will add peculiar weight to the preſent argument, to obſerve: that, as all things were created by God, he is, in conſequence of this, the natural and ſovereign Lord and Governor, poſſeſſed of an original and independent right to univerſal dominion; and the rectitude of his nature and character gives inconteſtible and ſupreme authority to his will. If properly adverted to, how ſacred, how inviolable the requirements, which come enforced with the ſanction of ſuch an authority? The requirements of a being to whom I owe my exiſtence, and all my happineſs! who has an original claim to my ſubmiſſion and obedience! all whoſe laws are the reſult of the moſt perfect wiſdom, juſtice and benevolence; and ultimately intended to preſerve the peace, order, and happineſs of his ſubjects!

The approbation of ſuch a being confers the higheſt honor; his favour is eſſential to our happineſs, the conſtant and inexhauſtible ſource of it, and affords us the moſt certain and

(e) Iſai. i. 2.

and reviving proſpects of eternal and advancing glory and bleſſedneſs. To gain them ſhould therefore be the object of our ſupreme ambition, claim our firſt ſolicitude, and the forfeiture of them be dreaded as the greateſt loſs we can poſſibly ſuſtain. And if the approbation and favour of God be indeed ſo infinitely important, and to be deprived of them ſo fatal to all our expectations and hopes: think, O think! how inſupportable the conſideration of incurring his diſpleaſure, *who, after he hath killed the body, hath power to caſt into hell (f)*. For, though he is not ſubject to the paſſions of anger and revenge, can neither be induced to puniſh, when the ends of of government, the preſervation of righteouſneſs, and the happineſs of his ſubjects, do not render it neceſſary, nor in any greater meaſure than juſtice and wiſdom, nay and even goodneſs, may require: yet from the character before given of his laws, they are plainly irreverſible: and the ſame perfections, which dictated, muſt infallibly lead him to inſiſt upon the obſervance of them; to ſupport them by the ampleſt proofs of his favour to the obedient, and the moſt ſignal and tremendous puniſhment of impenitent tranſgreſſors. This concluſion is confirmed by the expreſs and frequent declaration of the Goſpel of Chriſt, and his reſurrection affords a peculiar and convincing proof of it. *God hath appointed a day,*

(*f*) Luke xii. 5.

a day, in which he will judge the world in righteouſneſs, by that man whom he hath ordained, whereof he hath given aſſurance unto all men, in that he hath raiſed him from the dead (g). The ſame Goſpel, which contains the largeſt diſcovery of the divine grace and favour to the ſincerely holy and virtuous, does alſo in the ſtrongeſt manner *reveal the wrath of God from heaven, againſt all ungodlineſs and unrighteouſneſs of men, who hold the truth in unrighteouſneſs.* And if God is in or by Chriſt reconciling the humble and penitent to himſelf, yet is *our God* (and that in or by Chriſt) *a conſuming fire* to all the impenitent and irreclaimable.

2. This principle is the grand and moſt effectual ſecurity of virtue. To this conſideration our text more immediately leads us, in which *Joſeph* propoſes it to his brethren as the ground of their reliance on his promiſe. And as it hath been ſhewn, that it is due to the perfections of God, and becoming the relations we bear to him, from hence it will, I think, follow, that the virtue of men is in a moſt material and important point defective, if not performed from a ſupreme reverence to his authority, under the transforming influence of his perfections, and with a prevailing view to his approbation and acceptance. If it could ſubſiſt independent of piety, yet from whatever other motives

(g) Acts xvii. 31.

tives it proceeded, it would ſtill moſt certainly want the very principle on which it is moſt juſtly and properly founded, and from which it moſt naturally and regularly flows. And even he who was to do what is really agreeable to the will of God, but not from the influence of an internal regard to it as his will, could ſcarce be deemed truly and properly entitled to expect any reward for it from the Deity as moral Governor of the world. But indeed it is not in the leaſt likely, that any one, deſtitute of piety, ſhould be regular and conſtant in the practice of virtue. Can it be thought, that he will behave agreeably to his other relations, who acts contrary to the firſt, higheſt, and moſt obvious of all relations, that of a creature to the Father and Lord of the univerſe? That he will conſcientiouſly diſcharge obligations of a ſecondary and inferior nature, who neglects thoſe which are antecedent, primary, and ſupreme?

If it be ſaid, that there is an intrinſic excellence, and native beauty in virtue; that under this form it immediately recommends itſelf to the moral perception and ſenſe of our own minds, and ſhould on this account be admired and practiſed: I would aſk, can any thing appear more juſt, beautiful, and lovely, than that derived and dependent creatures ſhould act in conſtant and univerſal

verſal ſubordination to the will of the ſupreme, and moſt excellent of all Beings, the natural Lord, and ſovereign Ruler of the world, and with an ultimate view to his approbation and acceptance? And is it not highly juſt to refer our moral conſtitution itſelf to God, and conſider what it ſuggeſts and inclines us to, as bearing the proper force of his authority, and rendering us accountable to him for our conduct? If ſuch a conſtitution and frame lays us under an immediate obligation to virtue, will not this conſideration ſtrengthen, and compleat that obligation? Is not this neceſſary to be obſerved, if we would do full juſtice to the argument taken from the moral perception and ſenſe of our minds in favour of righteouſneſs; explain it in its true light; and give it its whole weight and influence? But after all, the argument drawn from the authority of God, the moſt perfect of Beings, the natural, and ſovereign governor of the world, who will undoubtedly render to all according to their works; lies more obvious to the common capacities of men, and is unqueſtionably moſt ſerviceable to the preſervation of virtue.

Or if it be alledged, that the natural tendency of virtue to happineſs, and of vice to miſery, is a powerful reſtraint from the one, and ſecurity for the practice of the other: yet we may, I hope, be again allowed to

aſk, whether this connection ought not to be conſidered as the appointment of God for this purpoſe, and from the eſſential perfections of his nature, fixed and unalterable; affording a proof that this order ſhall, in the final reſult of things, equally and invariably prevail, though it may in ſome caſes anſwer wiſe and good ends to beings in a ſtate of trial and diſcipline, that it is not at preſent more ſtrict, uniform, and certain in producing its effects. There may be, and unqueſtionably are, inſtances in which vice *appears* to ſubſerve the temporal intereſt, and virtue conduce to the temporal diſadvantages of men; and, therefore, this motive muſt derive its chief ſtrength from piety, in order to render it an adequate ſupport to virtue.

The wiſeſt and beſt regulated conſtitution of civil government in the whole world, will be always found in a conſiderable degree defective to the preſervation of virtue, and the peace, order, and happineſs of ſociety; becauſe many of its moſt wholſome laws, guarded by every poſſible ſanction, may be violated with ſecrecy, and conſequently with impunity: and from a ſenſe of this aroſe the cuſtom of appointing oaths to be taken in all caſes of peculiar moment. But eſpecially as vile men themſelves are unavoidably liable to be ſometimes advanced to the moſt important truſt of the execution of theſe laws,

laws, this will frequently occaſion the perverſion of judgment, a protection of the wicked, and an oppreſſion of the innocent.

A ſenſe of decency, a fear of ſhame, and a regard to honour in the eye of the world, will by no means be ſufficient to maintain righteouſneſs; not only becauſe great iniquity may, as we have obſerved, be concealed from the notice of men, but becauſe any general practice of ſin, will infallibly preſerve perſons from that common contempt and infamy, which vice deſerves, and would certainly be attended with, if mankind was leſs corrupt. And the two laſt motives reach no farther than to external acts, and have ſmall tendency to deſtroy and exterminate vice, and implant virtue in the mind.

But if there be in all men a tender ſenſe of decency and honor, and they are aſhamed of acting a baſe and unworthy part, that would ſink them in the eſteem of all wiſe and good men: how would they be affected, did they conſider, they were in the conſtant preſence, and under the inſpection of the wiſeſt and beſt of all Beings? If they generally dread the conſequence of their crimes, even from the hands of men, how would a reflection on God, who cannot be deceived, will not be mocked, and with whom no motive can weigh to reverſe the laws of impartial equity, deter them from that unrighteouſneſs, to which he has ſolemnly

lemnly denounced everlaſting deſtruction? A ſupreme veneration of his perfections and authority, attended with a deſire of his favour, and dread of his final diſpleaſure, habitually poſſeſſing the mind, muſt certainly ſecure a regard to all the laws of truth, juſtice, and goodneſs, which nothing elſe could. The weight and influence of ſuch a principle is in every circumſtance the ſame, entirely conſiſtent, uniform, and laſting; it ſupplies peculiar and additional motives, improves and ſtrengthens every other, is ſufficient to overbear any temptation which can ariſe to the human mind, extends to every inſtance of virtue, governs not only the act, but the affections and diſpoſitions of the mind; and, were it to prevail univerſally, would introduce ſuch a lovely ſcene of peace, order, harmony, beauty, and happineſs, as might enable this world to compare with heaven itſelf.

3. The excellence of this principle will ſtrongly appear in the character of *Joſeph*, whoſe conduct was directed under its conſtant and uniform influence. A remarkable inſtance of this we are preſented with in the hiſtory of his temptation to adultery from the wife of *Potiphar*. *Joſeph* was in the vigour of youth, a time of life in which the animal appetites exert their greateſt power over mankind, received direct and undiſguiſed ſolicitations to lewdneſs, from a quarter

quarter he might leaſt of all ſuſpect, and, which increaſed his difficulties, theſe were repeated after remonſtrances with her upon the horrid diſingenuity, and peculiar baſeneſs, of ſuch a crime againſt a maſter, who had ſo generouſly and highly honoured him with the utmoſt degrees of favour and confidence, and to whom he owed his liberty and happineſs; as well as the daring impiety of it to God, who himſelf abhors, whoſe laws expreſly prohibit all impurity, and who is the dread avenger of infidelity and wickedneſs. Theſe ſolicitations were repeated too with the enſnaring proſpect of the moſt guarded concealment, and attended with great importunity, and ſtrange indecencies, into which the violence of this brutal paſſion tranſported her. And had he been ſubject to pride and vanity, her ſuperior rank and quality would have added no inconſiderable force to the temptation. Beſides, the diſappointment of a woman of her condition, ſo mad with one of the baſeſt paſſions, after ſhe had been led by it to demean herſelf in the groſſeſt manner; might well be expected to occaſion the higheſt reſentment. A reſentment! which would in all probability prove fatal to one in *Joſeph*'s circumſtances, entirely dependent upon the family. But a ſenſe of religion, a mind fully poſſeſſed with a veneration of Deity, a reverence of his authority and laws, a dread

of

of his diſpleaſure, and prevailing ſolicitude to avoid that conduct which would deprive him of his favour and bleſſing; ſufficiently fortified his mind through this arduous trial of his virtue, overbore every other conſideration, and preſerved his integrity uncorrupted and inviolable. *How*, ſays he, *can I do this great wickedneſs, and ſin againſt God.*

Of the ſtrength and prevalence of this principle, we have a no leſs remarkable and amiable inſtance, in every part of *Joſeph*'s behaviour to his brethren. For mere envy, occaſioned by his father's peculiar indulgence and partiality, joined perhaps, as is common in this caſe, to ſome inconſiderate childiſh ſteps taken by him in conſequence of it; (for the hiſtorian informs us he *brought unto his father their evil report*) and his imagined vanity in relating two dreams which ſeemed to intimate his future exaltation over them. On theſe accounts, I ſay, their envy and rage roſe to that exceſſive degree, as to extirpate, not only all remains of fraternal affection, but of common humanity and tenderneſs, and produced the moſt implacable, ſavage, and cruel diſpoſition. They at firſt combined to murder him with their own hands, then to caſt him into a pit, abandoned to a ſeverer fate, and at laſt ſold him for a ſlave. For injuries great as theſe, what might have been expected, when providence afterwards put them entirely in his power? Far, however,

however, was he from indulging any diſpoſition to revenge and malice. He, indeed, *ſpake roughly unto them*, (as they expreſs it) terrified them by a ſhort impriſonment, under the pretended ſuſpicion of their being ſpies, and greatly alarmed them by inſiſting upon their bringing their youngeſt brother unto him, as a proof of their ſincerity, leaving one of their number for a hoſtage till their return; probably ſuppoſing the difficulty of procuring him of their father, the reaſon of his detaining him at home being eaſy to gueſs, ſince himſelf and *Benjamin* were his only children by *Rachel*: yet this was with the ſole benevolent view of reducing them to reflection and repentance. Baſe as they were, he aſſures them in our text of his conſcientious diſcharge of his part of the engagement, from the reverence he bore to the God of truth, and avenger of falſhood and wickedneſs. And when their affliction brought to their minds the injuſtice and barbarity of their conduct to himſelf, attended with ſtrong marks of remorſe, and terror of purſuing juſtice, tenderly touched with ſocial affection and overwhelmed with compaſſion for them, as expoſed to the moſt painful diſtreſs from the reflections of a guilty mind; he was obliged to turn aſide, and hide his tears.

When they returned with *Benjamin*, how ſtrictly did he regard his promiſe, immediately

diately releaſing *Simeon* their hoſtage? How benevolently accoſt them with enquiries concerning their welfare and the health of their aged parent? How reſpectfully addreſs himſelf to *Benjamin?* And with what hoſpitality and kindneſs entertain them all? The ſimple and plain narration of *Joſeph*'s Emotion, which ſucceeded his ſalutation of his brethren, and his difficulty in concealing it from them; will be ſtrongly felt, and greatly admired, by all thoſe who are acquainted with the delicate and pleaſing ſenſations ariſing from the ſocial virtues. *And Joſeph made haſte*, departed abruptly: *for his bowels did yearn upon his brethren, and he ſought where to weep, and he entered into his chamber and wept there. And he waſhed his face, and went out and refrained himſelf.*

It is true he had recourſe to an artifice, which ſhould render them liable to an accuſation of theft, providing alſo for fixing the charge upon *Benjamin*, by which he put them into the greateſt conſternation, and diſtreſs, the life of their father being *bound up in that of this Child.* But when he had prepared their minds by this alarm for receiving the diſcovery he intended to make of himſelf, with a proper ſenſe of the evil of their conduct: what amazingly generous concern does he expreſs for the pain and anguiſh of mind into which he threw them, though from the beſt and wiſeſt motive?

He

He wept aloud, inſomuch that the Egyptians, and the houſe of Pharaoh heard. With what unmerited pity to theſe unhappy men does he labour to prevent the dreadful apprehenſions, they might but too juſtly and naturally entertain? How amiably does this greatly injured man lay ſuch conſiderations before them, as ſhould induce them to forgive themſelves; concealing the barbarity of their conduct, by turning their thoughts to the more pleaſing view of the ſignal interpoſitions of a kind over-ruling providence in his favour, aſſuring them that all his ſufferings were conſiderably over-paid by the honor, dignity, and happineſs, to which he was at length exalted, and the opportunity afforded him of becoming, under God, the inſtrument of ſaving, not only his beloved ancient father, but his brethren, and even a whole kingdom? *And Joſeph ſaid unto his brethren, I am Joſeph: doth my father yet live? And his brethren could not anſwer him; for they were troubled at his preſence. And Joſeph ſaid unto his brethren, Come near to me I pray you: and they came near, and he ſaid, I am Joſeph your brother whom ye ſold into Egypt. Now therefore be not grieved, nor angry with yourſelves, that ye ſold me hither: for God did ſend me before you, to preſerve life. For theſe two years hath the famine been in the land: and yet there are five years, in which there ſhall neither be earing nor harveſt. And*

God ſent me before you, to preſerve you a poſterity in the earth, and to ſave your lives by a great deliverance. So now it was not you that ſent me hither, but God: and he hath made me a father to Pharaoh, and Lord of all his houſe, and a ruler throughout all the land of Egypt.

His proviſion for their ſettlement in *Egypt*, the manner of his taking his leave of them, when they went to conduct their father, his handſome and liberal preparation for their journey, and an appearance on the return of the family ſuitable to the relations of one in his ſtation, his kind parting caution to avoid contentions by the way, his intercourſe with his father and them on their arrival, his whole ſubſequent behaviour; is extremely tender and moving, inexpreſſibly great, noble, and good.

When, upon the death of their father, they were naturally ſeized with uneaſy apprehenſions, as ſuppoſing his forbearance of them might be chiefly owing to the reſpect he bore to his father, how kindly does he remove their fears, and convince them of his perfect reconciliation and unabated Favour? *And when Joſeph's brethren ſaw that their father was dead, they ſaid, Joſeph will peradventure hate us, and will certainly requite us all the evil which we did unto him. And they ſent a meſſenger unto Joſeph, ſaying, Thy father did command, before he died, ſaying, So ſhall ye*

ſay

ſay unto Joſeph, Forgive, I pray thee now, the treſpaſs of thy brethren and their ſin: for they did unto thee evil: and now, we pray thee, forgive the treſpaſs of the ſervants of the God of thy father. And Joſeph wept, when they ſpake unto him. And his brethren alſo went themſelves, *and fell down before his face, and they ſaid, Behold we be thy ſervants. And Joſeph ſaid unto them, Fear not, for am I in the place of God? But as for you, ye thought evil againſt me; but God meant it unto good, to bring to paſs as it is this day, to ſave much people alive. Now therefore fear ye not: I will nouriſh you, and your little ones. And he comforted them, and ſpake kindly unto them.* But it is not to be wondered, that he, who ſeriouſly conſidered power, authority, and influence over others, as an honorable and important truſt committed to him by God, ſhould, being ſo far in the place of God to them, employ that power, authority, and influence in a manner ſo agreeable to his will, and in ſo glorious an imitation of his own forbearance of offenders, and mercy and loving-kindneſs to the humble and penitent.

4. The principle we have been recommending is neceſſary to the divine acceptance, and the foundation of the moſt ſubſtantial peace and comfort. While we can acquit ourſelves, from an aſſurance that we *ſanctify the Lord God of Hoſts in our hearts,*

make him our fear and our dread, are habitually actuated by a ſupreme veneration of his perfections and authority; and, whatever be our imperfections, deſire above all things, to approve our conduct to him, who is acquainted with every action of our lives, the motives from which they ſpring, and the moſt ſecret thoughts and intentions of our hearts; *it is a ſmall thing with us* (as St. *Paul* expreſſeth himſelf) *to be judged of man's judgment (a)*, we obtain the trueſt ſupport to our minds againſt all the attacks of envy, uncharitableneſs, malice, and revenge; and enjoy the ſureſt ſource of peace, compoſure, and joy, amidſt all the vain united efforts of our enemies to deſtroy them by cenſure, calumny, and detraction.

Such a rational fear of God, as hath been explained, is certainly due, and really honorable to him; and muſt therefore, in its own nature, recommend us to his approbation and favour. *The Lord taketh pleaſure in them that fear him: in thoſe that hope in his mercy (b).* *O how great*, ſays the Pſalmiſt, *is thy goodneſs, which thou haſt laid up for them that fear thee (c)!* *Solomon* alſo, with the higheſt reaſon, aſſerts, that *in the fear of the Lord is ſtrong confidence, and his children have a place of refuge (d).* And as to the final iſſue of things, he concludes: *Though*

(a) 1 Cor. iv. 3.
(b) Pſal. cxlvii. 11.
(c) Pſal. xxxi. 19.
(d) Prov. xiv. 16.

Though a ſinner do evil an hundred times, and his days be prolonged; yet ſurely I know that it ſhall be well with them that fear God, which fear before him (a). This principle of piety may then ſupply us with the moſt ſolid ſatisfaction under the heavieſt affliction, in the very view of inſtant death, and before the awful tribunal of almighty God. The advantage of it *Joſeph* undoubtedly experienced in the various ſcenes of calamity which befel him: while a reflection upon their guilt, and the terror of divine juſtice perſuing them for their crimes, ſupplied the keeneſt anguiſh to the evils which came upon his brethren. From the circumſtances of the latter let wicked men be taught, that there is no ſafety in ſin, whatever flattering proſpects it ſhould preſent, but their iniquities, when leaſt expected, may frequently be detected and puniſhed in this world. And from the different condition of the former let the righteous remember, that the moſt melancholy appearances are ſometimes introductory to the moſt deſirable and happy events, under the ſecret guidance of the good providence of God, whoſe approbation and favour their piety ſecures. But however this be, there is a day approaching, when the different real characters of men ſhall be laid open, the wicked and ungodly ſhall be covered with ſhame and confuſion, all

(a) Eccl. viii. 12.

all the upright and pious lift up their heads with humble confidence and joy: and while thoſe *ſhall be puniſhed with everlaſting deſtruction from the preſence of the Lord, and the glory of his power*, theſe ſhall be admitted to honor, glory and happineſs eternal.

From the hiſtory, which we have been led in the courſe of this ſermon to conſider, I obſerve,

1. How highly blameable it is, for parents to make incautious diſtinctions in the regard they pay to their children. As to the reſt; this will diſcourage ſome tempers, irritate others, and ſuch a weakneſs the favourite himſelf will readily diſcern, be tempted to preſume upon, grow diſobedient to parental authority; and, perhaps, inſolent and tyrannical to his brethren. By theſe means the indulgent father loſes the reſpect and love of all his children, expoſes his darling to the utmoſt danger from the other branches of his family, ruins his virtue, and by the immoderate affection contracted for him, provides for his own future diſappointment, vexation, and peculiar anguiſh. This is the natural conſequence of ſuch a behaviour, though, in the inſtance before us, it proved in ſome reſpects different. *Iſrael*, it is ſaid, *loved Joſeph more than all his children, becauſe he was the ſon of his old age.* This was quickly diſcovered by the reſt, and his father's peculiar notice of him, probably, betrayed

trayed him into ſome imprudences in his free animadverſions upon their conduct, with which he acquainted his father; for, it is ſaid, *He brought to him their evil report*: This raiſed in them an implacable hatred, almoſt fatal to *Joſeph*, while his ſuppoſed death had like to have brought *the gray hairs* of Jacob *with ſorrow to the grave*. There is ſurely nothing which parents ſhould more carefully guard againſt, if they conſult their own eaſe and comfort, are anxious to preſerve the virtue of their children, ſtudy to ſecure their affection to themſelves, and promote peace, harmony, and love through their families.

2. It appears, from what hath been offered, that each of us ought to cultivate this principle, of the fear of God, in himſelf. Live then as in the preſence, and under the conſtant inſpection of God, entertaining the higheſt veneration of his perfections, a ſupreme reverence of his ſovereign authority, the utmoſt ſolicitude to ſecure his approbation and favour, and a dread of incurring his diſpleaſure. Conſider, whenever you find the leaſt reluctance to any duty, this is abſolutely enjoined by God, who has an original claim to my obedience, whoſe laws are, and muſt be, concerning all things right; and it is the requirement of a Being, to whom I owe myſelf, and all my temporal comforts; to whoſe grace, through Chriſt, I am indebted for

for the hope of pardon and eternal happineſs. And when tempted to any ſin, think, with indignation and horror; how can I conſent to this, when prohibited by ſuch an authority, and break through all reſtraints of the moſt ſacred and inviolable nature? To all the pleaſures and gratifications ariſing from vicious indulgences, oppoſe the peace of your own minds, the ſupreme honor of the divine approbation, and the infinite importance of the divine favour; and on the compariſon, the former will loſe their whole influence, appear *leſs than nothing, and altogether vanity.* To all the temporal diſadvantages, which may, in any particular inſtances, attend an adherence to religion and virtue, oppoſe the irreparable loſs of the protection, favour, and acceptance of God, and the inconceivable and tremendous evil of his diſpleaſure. To reſtrain you effectually from all wickedneſs, ever reflect; it is moſt abhorrent to the purity of his nature, contrary to the precepts of his goſpel, to this he has threatned everlaſting deſtruction, a threatning! which from the unchangeable perfections of his nature, he muſt unqueſtionably put into execution. He formed me for happineſs, an happineſs of a moſt refined and exalted kind; ſent his Son to redeem me from all iniquity, die for my offences, and conduct me to eternal glory and bleſſedneſs: and oh! ſhall I utterly

terly defeat his grace, render it neceſſary for the infinitely benevolent Being, *who made me, to have no mercy on me*, and for *him that formed me to ſhew me no favour (a)?*

3. If the principle, which hath been now explained and recommended, be ſo juſt and important, it behoves the friends of religion to endeavour to promote it in the world. Since it is a diſpoſition which the perfections of God demand, and becoming the relations which men bear to him, the moſt excellent of beings, the original and governor of all; and therefore cultivated in themſelves; they will, for the ſame reaſons, deſire it ſhould be univerſal: and if ſuch a deſire be genuine and unfeigned, it will naturally lead them according to their opportunities, abilities, and influence; by example, inſtruction, and exhortation to excite it in others. And as it is ſuch a guard and ſecurity to virtue, they ſhould alſo be engaged to do this, from a regard to their own ſafety and happineſs, from the principle of charity to their neighbours, and of extenſive and general benevolence to mankind: eſpecially amongſt their relatives, friends, dependents, and particular acquaintance, over whom they have peculiar influence, for whom they may naturally be ſuppoſed to be more nearly concerned, and with whom their own intereſts are more immediately connected. Could

(a) Iſaiah xxvii. 11.

you really prove ſucceſsful in the propagation of this principle of reverence to the Deity, you would make your children moſt ſurely dutiful, a comfort and bleſſing to you; your ſervants honeſt and faithful; your friends ſincere and cordial; your whole acquaintance juſt and kind: you would in the moſt valuable ſenſe advance the glory of God, their higheſt honor and intereſt, your own particular ſecurity and happineſs, and the univerſal ſafety and welfare of ſociety. Arguments theſe, the force of which no man of wiſdom, piety, humanity, and goodneſs can poſſibly reſiſt.

I would hope therefore a charity, chiefly intended to promote a ſpirit of rational piety, will meet with your encouragement. That you may judge how far the particular charity I would recommend, has any juſt pretenſions to your favourable regard, I will read you an account of it which was ſent to me by the managers.

The PRESENT STATE of the CHARITY-SCHOOL In *Gravel-Lane, Southwark.*

THE Foundation of it was laid in the year 1687, in the reign of King *James* the ſecond, when a ſchool was ſet up by one *Poulton* a Jeſuit, and public notice was given, that he would inſtruct the Children of the Poor *gratis:* upon which Mr. *Arthur Shallet*, Mr. *Samuel Warburton*, and Mr. *Ferdinando Holland*, laid the Foundation of this School, to avoid the dangerous conſequences of a *Popiſh* School, and provide for the inſtruction of the Children of the Poor in the *Proteſtant* way.

The number of ſcholars at firſt was 40, afterwards increaſed to 50, and now to 180. They are taught to read, write, and cypher, and are inſtructed in the principles of our common Chriſtianity, and thereby qualified for the ſervice of God and Man. It may be ſaid to be the firſt ſchool the Proteſtant Diſſenters were concerned in. Here objects

are received without diſtinction of parties, the common good being intended.

It is ſituated in one of the pooreſt parts of this city, and the children of the pooreſt ſort of watermen, fiſhermen, and others, are here taught; and are furniſhed with Bibles, Teſtaments, Catechiſms, writing and cyphering Books.

The charges have been defrayed by the gifts and ſubſcriptions of private perſons; with an annual collection in this place, on this day, and one in the city; likewiſe another at *Weſtminſter*; together with the kind remembrance of the ſaid ſchool by ſome in their laſt wills.

The original of this charity ought to recommend it to every ſincere proteſtant. The ſchool was founded, as you have heard, at a moſt dangerous criſis, when popery was likely to regain its dominon in theſe kingdoms, and the Jeſuit's ſcheme was artfully concerted to ſecure its progreſs. By this method the youth of the poor had been proſelyted to a ſuperſtition, which, under the notion of religious truth, inculcates ſuch monſtrous abſurdities, as contradict not only every dictate of reaſon, but all the notices of our ſenſes; ſubſtitutes, in the room of rational devotion, idle pomp, ridiculous

ridiculous and foppiſh rites of worſhip; by multiplying the objects of religious homage, greatly detracts from the adoration due to the one ſupreme Being, and infringes upon the rights of the only divinely conſtituted mediator between God and man; by its doctrine of penance and indulgence, prevents the natural influence of the principle we have been contending for, as a moſt powerful reſtraint from evil, and ſecurity to virtue; nay renders piety itſelf a moſt malignant principle, productive of deſtruction to all thoſe whom the inſolent pretender to infallibility ſhall be pleaſed to determine heretics, propagating an opinion, that he who killeth them doth God the moſt important ſervice. The poor innocents, who might by their unwary or unprincipled parents have been committed to the education of this *Jeſuit*, had been trained up for inſtruments of overturning the civil conſtitution of their country, depriving it of all its religious privileges, and of ſpreading univerſal devaſtation and murder. It is a common complaint, that popery has of late years greatly increaſed in theſe kingdoms; therefore ſuch a charity muſt ſtill merit the peculiar attention and ſupport of all true proteſtants, and the ſupport of it will now appear of peculiar conſequence, when we are actually at war with a ſtate, which has been reſtleſs in its attempts to impoſe this hurtful

ſuper-

ſuperſtition upon us, and rob us of all that is valuable to us as men and chriſtians.

This is ſaid to be the firſt ſchool the Proteſtant Diſſenters were concerned in, and by your encouragement of this ſchool let it be ſeen that the ſame laudable zeal remains amongſt us to guard our common Chriſtianity from the corruptions of the Romiſh church. There is in the admiſſion of children no regard paid to the little diſtinctions of parties amongſt proteſtants, and therefore this charity juſtly deſerves encouragement from perſons of all denominations.

The children are taught nothing but what will render them more immediately uſeful in any ſtation of life, the chief point attended to being this, of all others the moſt important, to inſtruct them in the knowledge of true religion, impreſs their tender minds with a reverence for God, and engage them to the practice of virtue. And, but for you, it is to be feared from the circumſtances of their parents, many of theſe poor children muſt have remained unprincipled in virtue, greatly ignorant of God and their duty; would have been early initiated in profaneneſs and vice, made injurious to the peace, order, and happineſs of ſociety, and in peculiar danger of everlaſting miſery.

I ſhall

I ſhall conclude with obſerving,

4. This principle, of the fear of God, ſhould recommend others to our eſteem, confidence, and love. As it hath appeared to be in itſelf highly juſt and laudable, it gives them a ſtrong title to expect this from us. And if we ourſelves entertain a rational ſupreme reverence of the Deity, it is natural that we ſhould be peculiarly pleaſed with thoſe who entertain the like, and right that we ſhew on all occaſions how greatly we prefer them to others. Well therefore might the Pſalmiſt conſider it as a proof of his own piety, that *he was a companion of all thoſe that feared God, and in them was all his delight (a)*. Since this principle is alſo the moſt effectual ſupport of virtue, and in its own nature productive of all that can complete the moſt worthy, amiable, and uſeful character, it is the wiſdom and intereſt of every particular perſon to prefer thoſe who poſſeſs it to his higheſt regard and affection, and ſelect them for his aſſociates, friends, and ſervants. I readily allow that ſuch a preference muſt be conducted with diſcretion and wiſdom, leſt we give any ground for ſuſpecting us of pride, moroſeneſs, or hypocriſy; or ſo exclude others as to loſe our whole influence over them, and every probable opportunity of effecting their reformation. Some may have run into a very hurtful extreme in this point, and by denying

(a) Pſal. cxix. 63. xvi. 3.

denying almoſt any ſocial intercourſe with men deſtitute of piety, perhaps contributed to encreaſe their unhappy prejudices againſt religion. But were the friends of virtue, under the regulations of prudence, to diſcover a conſiderable diſtinction in favour of thoſe who fear God, it would, I preſume, have at leaſt a tendency to produce greater decorum of behaviour in general, encourage and fortify the godly, check the impious, and preſerve thoſe, who ſeem already well inclined to religion, from that falſe ſhame, *and enſnaring fear of men*, which too often leads them to a fatal compliance with the faſhionable profaneneſs and vices of the age.

The E N D.